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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001152

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR SPLM OFFICIALS: "WE ARE NOW AT THE CRITICAL
CROSSROADS"

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1080
[B](#). KHARTOUM 1130
[C](#). KHARTOUM 1076

Classified By: DCM Mark Asquino for reasons 1.4.(a)(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During new U.S. Consul General Rogers' initial round of courtesy calls, senior Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) officials told her they viewed the next three months as "critical" to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) and threatened to withdraw from the Government of National Unity (GNU) if the referendum law was not passed by year's end. Interlocutors were skeptical that ongoing negotiations to resolve the impasse over the census and referendum law between Government of South Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar and GNU Second Vice President Ali Osman Taha would be successful. Representatives repeated the assertion that the National Congress Party (NCP) was deliberately destabilizing the South. They again called for USG military support to help "guarantee" the CPA. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) In her first two weeks at post, the incoming Consul General called on SPLM Secretary General Pa'gan Amun, Minister of Legal Affairs Michael Makuei, Chief of Staff Major General James Hoth and Minister of Presidential Affairs Dr. Luka Biong Deng, for a CPA status update. While these interlocutors did not share opinions universally, some common themes emerged.

IF NOT REFERENDUM LAW, NO CPA

[1](#)3. (C) SPLM officials stated that many observers erroneously believed Sudan would be at the "critical crossroads" on January 5, 2011, the date of the CPA mandated referendum on whether South Sudan will secede or remain united with the North. However, the "critical crossroads" period was actually now -- between October and December --they maintained. If by year's end the National Assembly failed to pass the referendum law, Amun vowed that the SPLM would "walk out of the GNU...for good, this time" and that there would "no longer be a CPA." (Note: In the October 5 opening session of the National Assembly, Sudan President Omer Al-Bashir affirmed his commitment to having the referendum law passed this session, but offered no details. End Note)

[1](#)4. (C) Amun and Makuei maintained that the NCP was trying to delay passage of the referendum law by linking it to nascent discussions between the parties on possible post-2011 arrangements. Makuei said that while discussion of some of those issues might induce greater NCP flexibility in meeting the remaining CPA milestones, it was imperative that the referendum law not be held hostage to those discussions.

Amun, Biong, and Makuei concurred that post-2011 discussions should be secondary to resolution of "core" CPA issues, such as the census, elections preparations and the referendum law.

SCANT CONFIDENCE IN THEIR MAN IN KHARTOUM NEGOTIATIONS - GOSS
VICE PRESIDENT MACHAR

15. (C) Asked about on-going discussions between Machar and Taha to resolve some of the sticking-points related to the census and referendum law (Ref A), Biong said gently, "our Vice President is an optimistic man." Makuei and Amun were more dismissive. Amun stated "Taha and Machar have been going around in circles for two years without results, why should now be any different?" Brandishing a hefty folder, Makuei scoffed that he had not yet even bothered to read Machar's report on items agreed and disagreed because the "NCP would renege." Makuei stressed that "so-called agreed items" were meaningless unless initialed by both parties.

16. (C) Turning to the specifics of the Taha-Machar talks, Biong said he believed progress had been made in resolving some issues related to voter eligibility for the referendum; the number of polling stations to be established in the North; and the external countries in which Southern Sudanese will have the opportunity to vote. Biong also confirmed that the NCP had offered a complex compromise proposal to unblock the census dispute, which the SPLM was still considering. There was no progress on the quorum required to legitimize a separation vote (Ref A).

17. (C) Not surprisingly, as the architect of the recently

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concluded SPLM-hosted "All Parties Political Conference (AAPC)", Amun said he believed working with Northern parties was the most effective mechanism to "pressure" the NCP into making concessions on the referendum law (Ref B). Amun added that the SPLM was careful not to call for a frontal assault against the NCP at this juncture. However, if there were no movement on the referendum law, the SPLM would "turn the Juba declaration into an alliance and mobilize against the NCP" in the upcoming elections. (Comment: Amun's pledge to "take on" the NCP in the elections notwithstanding, Biong and Makuei both stated that the SPLM had not/not yet reached a decision on whether it will participate in the April elections; and that even in the event the decision was yes, the SPLM was "not ready." End Comment.)

A PLEA (AGAIN) FOR ARMS FOR THE SPLA

18. (C) Military Chief of Staff Hoth, Amun and Makuei made the, by now, perfunctory pitch for more arms for the SPLA. Hoth insisted that the September 20 "tribal clashes" in Jonglei, which left 72 persons dead (Ref C), bore what he described as the "hallmark" of the NCP. Hoth said that the GoSS planned to confront this "NCP manipulation" by: 1) continuing its disarmament plan; 2) continuing to engage the civilian population, urging them not to "be tempted by the NCP" into harming their "own people"; and 3) seeking help from the international community to strengthen the SPLA. CG reiterated USG policy of not providing lethal equipment or training to the SPLA. She also encouraged the SPLA to share information if it had proof that the NCP was involved in arming southern militias.

COMMENT

19. (C) The window is narrowing for implementation of core CPA milestones - elections and the referendum. Separately, the NCP announced plans to begin voter registration November 11. If/if progress is being made in resolving the census dispute, that would represent an important step forward. We will encourage the SPLM to react to the NCP's proposal

forthwith with either an acceptance or a counter proposal. However, the number one priority of the SPLM will continue to be the referendum law. We will, of course, continue to track and push for its passage with both parties.

WHITEHEAD